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October 13, 2004

To: State Agency Secretaries
State Department Directors
Operational Area Emergency Services Coordinators
Tribal Chairpersons

Subject: The National Incident Management System and Standardized Emergency Management System

This letter is to inform you about a new federal requirement from Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that will affect future federal funding for California. DHS has developed a National Incident Management System (NIMS) under Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) – 5, *Management of Domestic Incidents*. NIMS was designed to improve the national readiness to respond to not only terrorist events but all types of disasters. NIMS is similar to California's Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS), which was adopted through legislation and regulation in the 1990s. This similarity is most evident in the NIMS version of the Incident Command System (ICS) and adoption of the concept of mutual aid. The final version of NIMS was released on March 1, 2004. For more details on NIMS I encourage you to refer to the FEMA website: www.fema.gov/nims.

To implement NIMS, the Department of Homeland Security created the National Incident Management System Integration Center (NIC). During July and August 2004 NIC developed compliance requirements for NIMS. Recognizing the difficulty of implementing NIMS nationwide, DHS decided to phase in NIMS over time, from FY 05 through FY 07, as identified in the enclosed letter dated September 8, 2004, to the Governors from Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge. As a result of this effort, all federal departments, agencies, state, local, and tribal governments are required to fully comply with NIMS by FY 2007 in order to be eligible to apply for federal preparedness assistance.

The implementation steps identified in Secretary Ridge's letter indicate the need to formally recognize NIMS, assess existing capabilities and shortfalls and identify a process to comply with NIMS. The goal of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) is to identify methods and guidance to assist all levels of emergency management in California to meet the requirements of NIMS while maintaining compliance with SEMS.

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I am encouraged by the recent adoption of the SEMS Introductory, Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and Field Courses by the federal Office for Domestic Preparedness. This action permits local government to utilize the 2003/04 Homeland Security Grant Program and Urban Area Security Initiative training funds for SEMS training. NIMS related enhancements will focus primarily on the SEMS EOC Course; however, I believe that no portion of the SEMS ACI is contrary to the basic tenets of NIMS.

The most appropriate mechanism to address compliance with NIMS is the SEMS Maintenance System. Its purpose is to address changes in SEMS in a timely and orderly manner. It is a hierarchical structure consisting of an Advisory Board, Technical Group, Specialist Committees, and Mutual Aid Regional Advisory Committees (MARACs) representing each of the six OES Mutual Aid Regions. There have been many changes in the emergency management arena since the SEMS Technical Group and Advisory Board last met. Membership in both groups is currently under review to determine the best representation to meet future needs. Meetings of these reconstituted committees will be scheduled in the near future.

You are encouraged to share this information with your constituents. Information on future SEMS meetings and NIMS issues will be posted on the OES web page: www.oes.ca.gov.

I appreciate your comments and assistance in this effort and in improving the ability of California to reduce the effects of disasters through improved emergency management.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

HENRY R. RENTERIA
Director

Enclosures